

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



PRISTINE SEAS



An underwater photograph showing several seals swimming in clear, turquoise water. The seals are seen from below, with their heads and flippers visible. The water is bright and clear, with some bubbles and light reflections. The overall tone is serene and natural.

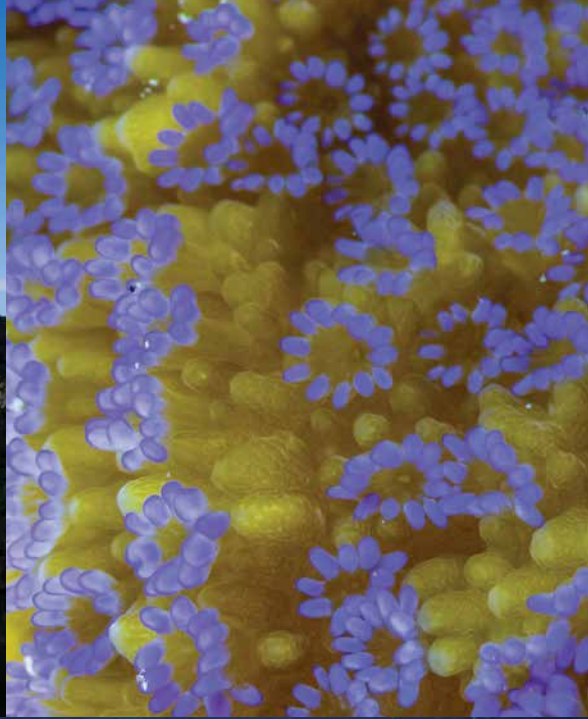
PRISTINE SEAS

“To prevent the extinction of species and the collapse of our life support system, we must protect 30% of the ocean by 2030. 30x30 not only makes sense economically, it is a moral imperative.”

ENRIC SALA

National Geographic Explorer in Residence, Executive Director, Pristine Seas

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Dear Friends,

Looking back at 2024, I am blown away by the remarkable people who empowered Pristine Seas to achieve meaningful work throughout the year. From donors who equipped us with resources to think big and local researchers who helped us navigate unfamiliar ecosystems — we were able to make strides in ocean conservation because of your generous support.

Together, we made 2024 a year for the books. Aiming for fewer, bigger, and better expeditions allowed our team to meet the expectations of government leaders and communities who rely on our engagement to inform ocean conservation priorities. We are now spending more quality time with policymakers, understanding their needs and delivering the technical expertise they require to adequately protect their waters. Longer time in-country has also given us the space to listen intently to communities who depend on the ocean — and step up to fulfill their requests, like opportunities for their children to learn more about marine science.

Our brand-new submersible, the Argonauta, has been a welcome addition to the team — equipping us to gather new data and film the least explored, least understood parts of our planet. We are looking forward to seeing which new frontiers the submersible will take us, as it expands our direct observations to 1,300 meters depth.

In 2025, our Global Expedition will continue in the tropical Pacific, where we are laying the policy and scientific groundwork for improved conservation areas. We will also join National Geographic Channel, Dynamic Planet, Don Quixote Foundation, Prince Albert II Foundation, Silverback Films and other partners in releasing a breathtaking film narrated by David Attenborough about the benefits of marine protected areas (MPAs) to people and wildlife.

Effective ocean conservation is a team effort. Thank you for being part of our crew.



ENRIC SALA
National Geographic Explorer in Residence
Executive Director, Pristine Seas

AT A GLANCE

PRISTINE SEAS
FOUNDED IN 2008

46 EXPEDITIONS



6.9 MILLION
SQUARE KILOMETERS
HIGHLY PROTECTED



30+
DOCUMENTARY
FILMS



2.7 MILLION
FOLLOWERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

300+
PEER-
REVIEWED
PAPERS



10
ECONOMIC
REPORTS

29 MPAs
CREATED WITH OUR HELP

76,000+
NAUTICAL
MILES AT
SEA



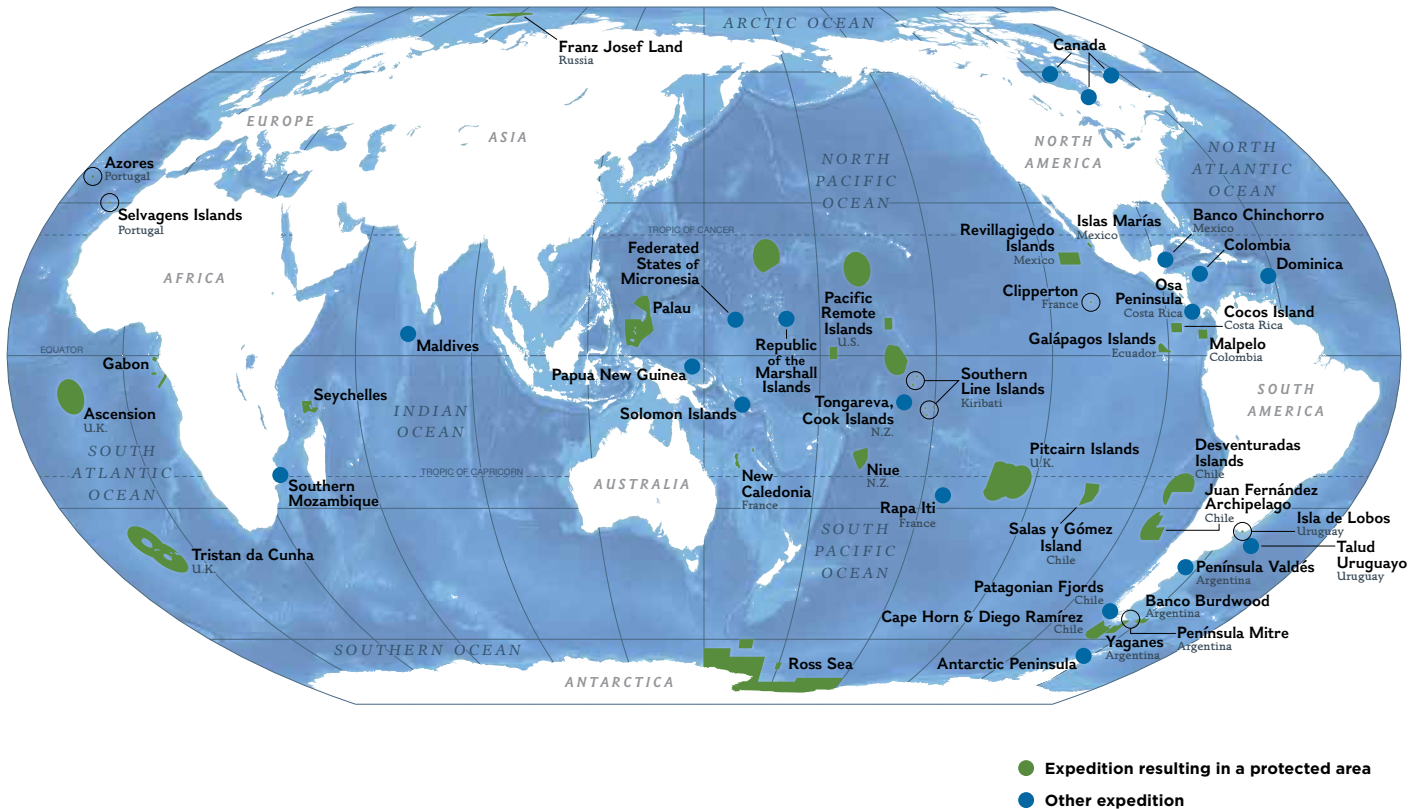
11,700+
HOURS UNDERWATER



46
EXPEDITION
SCIENTIFIC
REPORTS



12,000+
DIVES



“

We're showing the rest of the world that it can be done. Yes, we're small, but we're showing the way.”

DALTON TAGELAGI
Premier of Niue



Since 2008, Pristine Seas has conducted 46 expeditions globally and helped create 29 marine protected areas (MPAs), totaling more than 6.9 million square kilometers (the size of the Amazon region).



Research helps policymakers and communities make decisions.

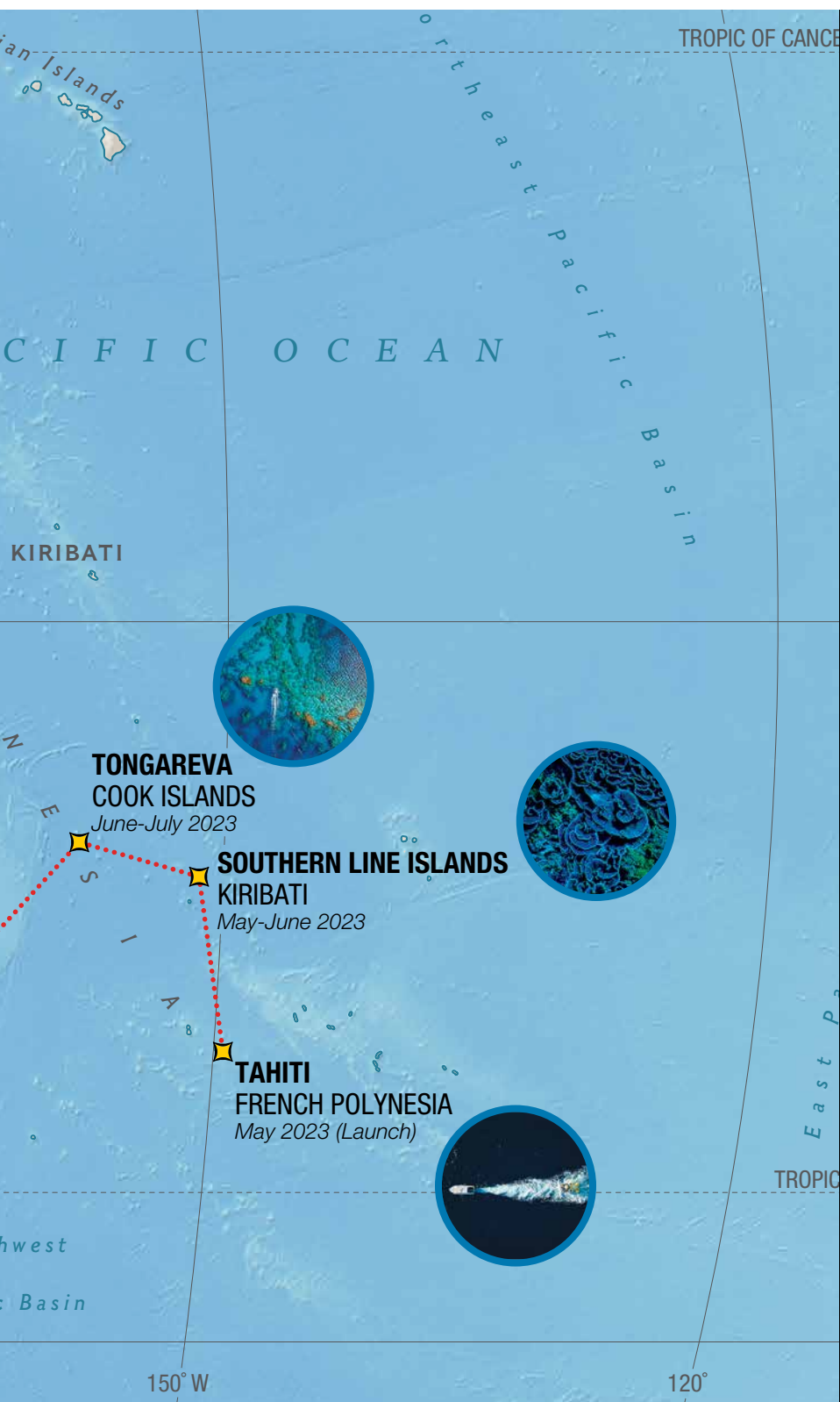


Storytelling inspires people and governments to protect vital areas.



Engaging governments and communities ensures they are in the driver's seat.





The Global Expedition is a bold effort — launched in 2023 — to explore lesser-known areas of the tropical Pacific Ocean. Aboard our custom research vessel, the Argo, the Pristine Seas team and local experts conduct underwater research and support local protection efforts to help countries reach their marine protection goals.





SIGHTS 2024

In 2024, Pristine Seas achieved significant milestones in marine conservation. From helping to create three new marine protected areas (MPAs) to inspiring Greece's ban on bottom trawling and advising Palau on its marine spatial planning process, our collaborative efforts safeguard biodiversity and support sustainable local economies. With a newly-measured mega coral and restored marine life in Chile serving as beacons of hope this year, we continue to work tirelessly towards the preservation of the world's oceans.



Uruguay



Azores



Republic of the
Marshall Islands

3 NEW

marine protected
areas created
with the support
of Pristine Seas

335K

square kilometers
of ocean protected
with the support
of Pristine Seas



SAFEGUARDING SEA LIONS AND OTHER MARINE LIFE

Uruguay

Pristine Seas' 2021 scientific expeditions to Uruguay paid off when in August 2024, President Luis Lacalle Pou declared the establishment of a new MPA around Isla de Lobos, 8.1 kilometers off the coast of the famed Punta del Este city. Home to one of the largest sea lion colonies in South America, the designation will safeguard these animals and other vital marine life from the impacts of overfishing the sea lions' prey. The findings from our two expeditions — which were conducted in partnership with Uruguay's National Navy, Mar Azul Uruguayo, and other local organizations — were presented to President Lacalle Pou along with recommendations for designating protected areas in the Uruguayan sea.





“

The health and sustainability of the Azores' marine environment are crucial not only for local communities but also for global marine biodiversity, climate stability, and oceanic health. Protecting this ecosystem is essential for preserving its ecological, economic, and cultural values.”

ALAN FRIEDLANDER
Senior Marine Scientist, Pristine Seas



ESTABLISHING THE LARGEST MARINE PROTECTED AREA IN EUROPE

Azores

In an exciting leap toward the global 30x30 target, the Azores — a chain of nine islands that is part of Portugal — approved legislation for the largest MPA in the North Atlantic. Fifteen percent of Azorean waters are now designated as fully protected and 15% as highly protected, meaning that fishing and other extractive activities will either be restricted or banned in the area. A science-based and highly participatory process shepherded by the regional government led to the creation of the network, the Azores Marine Protected Area Network (RAMPA). The area, which totals 287,000 square kilometers of marine protection, will safeguard deep-sea corals, whales, dolphins, sharks, manta rays, fish, and unique hydrothermal vent ecosystems.

In 2018, in partnership with the regional government, local scientists, the Waitt Institute, Oceano Azul Foundation and other partners, Pristine Seas participated in scientific expeditions in the Azores to help identify priority areas for protection. Using high-tech tools like underwater cameras to assess coastal, open sea and deep sea areas, the expeditions added new information about their biodiversity — as well as the impact of human activity.





PROTECTING PRISTINE CORAL ATOLLS

Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) has created its first marine sanctuary around the remote northern atolls of Bikar and Bokak. The area will fully protect from fishing two uninhabited atolls, their surrounding waters, and the nearby deep sea. These two atolls harbor some of the most pristine ecosystems in the central and western Pacific, and epitomize the “amazing haven untouched” at the heart of the Marshall Islands’ conservation vision. The extraordinary condition of the biodiversity of these marine ecosystems contains most of RMI’s conservation area targets, including the country’s largest green turtle nesting colony, abundant deep sea sharks, and mature *Pisonia* forests in excellent condition.

Pristine Seas conducted an expedition to the Marshall Islands from September to October 2023, in collaboration with the Marshall Islands Marine Resources Authority (MIMRA). The expedition carried out the first comprehensive surveys of the marine ecosystem at both atolls, from the surface to 2,340 meters depth, from the lagoons to offshore.









INFORMING MARINE SPATIAL PLANNING

Palau

In February and March, Pristine Seas conducted a research expedition to remote and lesser-studied regions of Palau. The goal was to provide scientific information about the biodiversity of the country's marine environment to support Palau's Marine Spatial Plan in creating highly protected marine areas that are effective and beneficial for those living in the island nation. Palau had a no-take marine sanctuary covering 80% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), but during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government decided to undertake a marine spatial plan to reduce the size of the no-take area and increase the area for commercial tuna fishing.

The government requested our support in identifying the top priority areas of the EEZ — as a minimum to protect both marine biodiversity and enhance food security. Our expedition and modeling work identified that the waters fifty nautical miles around all of Palau's islands are the minimum area to conserve (covering 29% of the EEZ) in order to protect vulnerable biodiversity and ecological connectivity, while not impacting tuna fishing.

Our expedition not only yielded a scientific report to help the government make difficult decisions, but also engaged the local community in new and exciting ways — such as taking local educators aboard for days at a time to learn about field research and engaging more than 40% of Palau's students in virtual explorer classroom activities. In the end, the Government of Palau ended up keeping a large swath of the ocean protected: 50% of their EEZ. The good news is that the current 50% conserves areas of greater priority for biodiversity than the previous 80% — and should also improve local fishing via fish spillover from the MPA.



FINDING THE WORLD'S LARGEST CORAL

Solomon Islands

During an expedition in the Solomon Islands, our team made a dream discovery: the world's largest coral! Measuring 34 meters long x 32 meters wide x 5.5 meters high, the gigantic organism is a complex network of coral polyps — tiny individual creatures — that have grown over a span of three centuries. Longer than the planet's biggest animal, the blue whale, the mega coral is three times larger than the previously reported record-breaker and is believed to store a record of ocean conditions from the past. Mostly brown but with splashes of bright yellows, blues and reds, the mega coral is covered with ripples of waves, mirroring the ocean's surface.

When underwater cinematographer Manu San Félix initially spotted the structure, he thought it might be remnants of a shipwreck, due to its size. When he dove down for a closer look, he discovered it was an exceptionally big *Pavona clavus*. Despite its size, the coral has never been documented, with the local community reporting they did not know it was there.

News of the mega coral made headlines around the globe — appearing above the fold in print newspapers from *The Wall Street Journal* and *Financial Times* to the *Solomon Star*. Our stunning photos and video were published by *The Guardian*, the *Associated Press*, *Reuters*, *CNN*, *ABC Australia*, *El País*, *AFP*, *PacNews*, *Al Jazeera*, *USA Today* and hundreds of others.

SCAN for
press release:



“

The ocean provides for our livelihoods and has contributed so much to our national economy and communities. Our survival depends on healthy coral reefs, so this exciting discovery underlines the importance of protecting and sustaining them for future generations.”

JEREMIAH MANELE
Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands





WITNESSING THE BENEFITS OF A NO-TAKE RESERVE COME TO LIFE

Chile

The Juan Fernández Archipelago lies in the Pacific Ocean about 600 kilometers off the coast of Chile. In 1935, its residents self imposed the first management rules to catch lobster: a minimum catch size limit, a closed season, and the obligation to return the females with eggs to the ocean. While the coastal lobster fishery was well managed, the waters around the islands were threatened by industrial fishing fleets conducting bottom trawling on fragile seamounts. The local fishers complained about a decline in the large fish they used to be able to catch offshore. In 2016, several local leaders asked Pristine Seas to help them protect the waters around their islands. Two years later, President Michelle Bachelet officially designated the fully protected Juan Fernández Marine Park, encompassing 262,000 square kilometers — roughly the size of New Zealand.

Today, the local fishers continue catching lobster for export in a sustainable way, but the big news is that the large fish that were targeted by industrial fleets are back in the ocean! After many years of letting marine life thrive, it is now common to catch large groupers like those in the photo. It is the best example we have of fish spillover from a no-take reserve we've helped to create. The Juan Fernández community feels ownership of the MPA, is benefitting from it, and has become its best steward.





BANNING BOTTOM TRAWLING IN MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

Greece

At the Our Ocean Conference in April, Greece made a groundbreaking announcement to ban bottom trawling across all of its national marine parks and protected areas by 2030. This landmark decision — inspired by a study co-authored by Pristine Seas' researchers and Enric's direct discussions with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis — makes Greece the first country in Europe to ban bottom trawling within its MPAs. By prohibiting bottom trawling, the country aims to protect critical habitats that support a wide variety of marine species, and avoid significant CO₂ emissions. Greece's bold move was informed by our study, *Atmospheric CO₂ emissions and ocean acidification from bottom-trawling*, which revealed bottom trawling to be a previously unaccounted for source of atmospheric carbon emissions (see Research section).

SCAN for
press release:





A WHIRLWIND

JANUARY

- ▶ Bottom trawling paper published in *Frontiers for Marine Science* with potential reach in the press of more than one billion readers
- ▶ Submersible media shoot: sea trials
- ▶ One Health journalist training: building climate resilience via ocean protection



FEBRUARY

- ▶ Expedition to Palau begins
- ▶ Palau's *Island Times* newspaper prints front-page story about expedition
- ▶ Students across the Pacific participate in the Palau Explorer Classroom Series
- ▶ Federated States of Micronesia post-expedition engagement
- ▶ Kashechewan media shoot
- ▶ Pacific Talanoa and relationship building in Fiji
- ▶ Palau rescue diver team training



MARCH

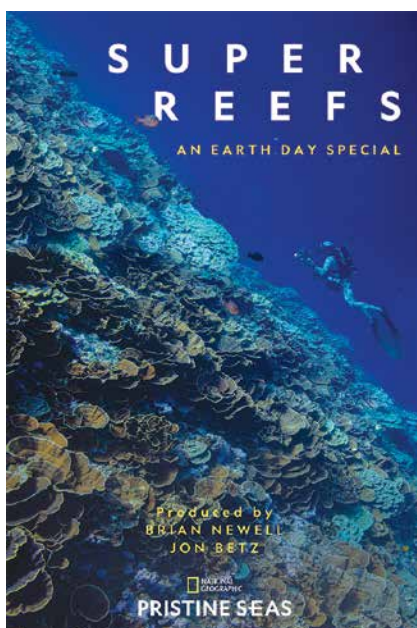
- ▶ Pristine Seas exhibit opens at the Maritime Museum of Denmark
- ▶ *BBC Radio* reporter embeds aboard the Argo in Palau
- ▶ Scout trip to Papua New Guinea
- ▶ *Economist Impact* piece goes live during the World Ocean Summit
- ▶ The Pacific Community (SPC) Education Summit
- ▶ Federated States of Micronesia's President Wesley Simina visits NGS basecamp
- ▶ Scout trip to the Solomon Islands
- ▶ Pristine Seas exhibit at the Borgholm Castle
- ▶ Golfo San Jorge, Argentina, mini-expedition & media shoot
- ▶ Palau expedition ends with community event and field edit screening



JOURNEY THROUGH 2024

APRIL

- ▶ *Super Reefs* premieres on Earth Day
- ▶ Nunatsiavut media shoot
- ▶ Greece announces an end to bottom trawling in MPAs at the Our Ocean Conference
- ▶ *The Nature of Nature* book relaunch
- ▶ Pristine Seas in-person team retreat
- ▶ Expedition scientific report delivered to the Republic of the Marshall Islands



MAY

- ▶ Pristine Seas marks year one of The Global Expedition!
- ▶ Submersible media shoot: delivery to Australia
- ▶ *Protecting Paradise: The Story of Niue* premieres locally to much fanfare
- ▶ Republic of the Marshall Islands' President Hilda Heine visits NGS basecamp
- ▶ *Península Valdés: The Cradle of Patagonia* honored with the Audience Choice Award at the Santiago Wild Film Festival
- ▶ Op-ed authored by Cardinal Peter Turkson and Enric Sala appears in *L'Osservatore Romano*



JUNE

- ▶ Global premiere of *Protecting Paradise: The Story of Niue*
- ▶ *National Geographic Magazine*, *ABC Australia*, *RNZ*, and other outlets cover the launch of *Protecting Paradise* to streaming audiences
- ▶ National Marine Sanctuary Foundation presents Pristine Seas with the Conservation Innovation Award at Capitol Hill Ocean Week (CHOW)
- ▶ NGS Explorers Festival
- ▶ Scout trip to the Solomon Islands
- ▶ Expedition scientific report delivered to Palau
- ▶ Expedition scientific report delivered to Niue



JULY

- ▶ Expedition to Papua New Guinea (PNG) begins with launch event in Port Moresby
- ▶ PNG newspaper, *Post Courier*, begins printing weekly column on our expedition
- ▶ *Super Reefs* musical score gets accolades in the press
- ▶ Fiji expedition scoping trip



AUGUST

- ▶ Uruguay announces Isla de Lobos reserve — marking the 27th MPA that Pristine Seas has supported
- ▶ Pristine Seas' scientists teach data analysis course to ocean practitioners at the Solomon Islands National University
- ▶ PNG submersible training: Dyaul Island
- ▶ 53rd Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Secretariat Leaders Meeting
- ▶ News piece about PNG expedition reaches *EuroNews*' top 5 most-read articles of the day
- ▶ The Earthshot Prize features Pristine Seas on its social channels
- ▶ Uruguay MPA announcement becomes our most viewed social media video to date
- ▶ *Nature* publishes letter from 300+ scientists, led by Enric Sala, about the Selvagens Islands Nature Reserve being at risk



SEPTEMBER

- ▶ Op-ed about the connection between surfing and ocean protection goes live in *The Revelator*
- ▶ Solomons pre-expedition community outreach visits
- ▶ PNG expedition leg two begins to Manus and Remote Western Islands
- ▶ Former President Bill Clinton and Postcode Lottery Group present Enric with an award at a plenary session of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), including a donation to Pristine Seas
- ▶ Pristine Seas exhibit opens at the National Aquarium of New Zealand
- ▶ The Argonauta — our new submersible — makes first scientific dive (in PNG!)
- ▶ Senckenberg Prize awarded to Enric Sala in Frankfurt, Germany
- ▶ Enric Sala inducted into the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame



OCTOBER

- ▶ PNG expedition ends with government event and field edit screening
- ▶ Expedition to the Solomon Islands begins with a launch event in Honiara
- ▶ Global Nature Positive Summit
- ▶ Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and pre-event press briefing
- ▶ MPA gap analysis study, *A pathway to protect 30% of coastal waters by 2030*, released ahead of COP16
- ▶ Scout trip to Tuvalu
- ▶ *BBC Wildlife Magazine* features our photographers' crocodile fish visuals from PNG
- ▶ Together for the Ocean, white label campaign to inspire 30x30 progress, launches
- ▶ Azores MPA declared, marking the 28th MPA created with the help of Pristine Seas
- ▶ Pristine Seas exhibit opens at the Borneo Cultures Museum
- ▶ Biocultural synthesis of Yagan Usi, the Yagan Territory report and event

NOVEMBER

- ▶ Scout trip to Rotuma, Fiji
- ▶ Pristine Seas Exhibit opens at Haggin Museum
- ▶ Canada Film Premiere in Ottawa (Hudson and James Bay film)
- ▶ Disney's *Moana 2* premieres in theaters with Pristine Seas as its charitable partner
- ▶ The Republic of the Marshall Islands protected area signed, marking the 29th MPA created with the help of Pristine Seas
- ▶ Pristine Seas finds and measures the world's largest known coral

DECEMBER

- ▶ Educators from the Solomon Islands join the expedition for three days of learning
- ▶ Solomon Islands expedition ends with event and field edit screening
- ▶ Scout trip to Vanuatu



RESEARCH

PROTECTING OUR OCEANS THROUGH
INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

2024 TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

25K+
BIRDS
RECORDED



1,200+
DIVES
CONDUCTED

3,800+
NAUTICAL
MILES
TRAVELED



100+
DEEP SEA
CAMERA
DEPLOYMENTS



200K+
FISH COUNTED
& MEASURED

14
PAPERS
PUBLISHED

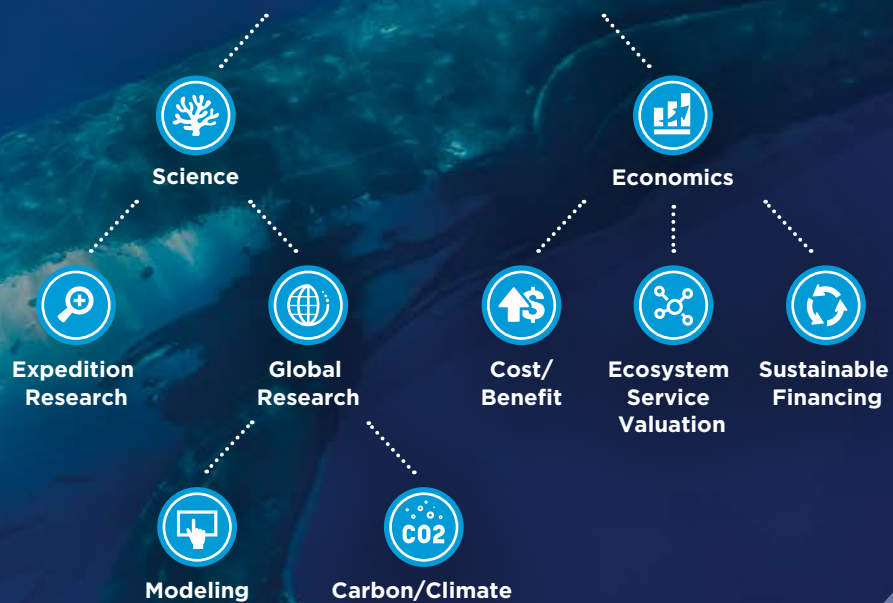
1,700+
HOURS
UNDERWATER



Pristine Seas' research supports leaders in deciding which marine areas to protect. Fieldwork from expeditions and global studies (e.g., conservation maps, carbon emissions from bottom trawling) shape scientific insights, while economic analyses make the case for MPAs and identify funding options. The power of our research is realized during discussions with country leaders, where we offer actionable protection recommendations.

RESEARCH

Our science and economic research helps global leaders protect high-priority marine areas that benefit biodiversity, food security, and climate resilience.





Unveiling a New Source of Atmospheric Carbon Emissions

When we published our global priorities paper in 2021 and found that bottom trawling — by disturbing the sediment carbon on the seafloor — produces underwater CO₂ emissions larger than Germany's total emissions, the critics said that they didn't believe it, just because they didn't believe it. We were told our estimates of sediment carbon emissions were exaggerated. After much arm-waving and no real evidence from the critics, some said that these carbon emissions don't count anyway because only atmospheric emissions count under the Paris Agreement. We saw denial similar to that questioning global warming.

To silence these unfounded criticisms, Pristine Seas partnered with a global team of climate and ocean experts from Utah State University, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, the University of California Santa Barbara, Columbia University, and James Cook University. The study revealed that over half of the underwater emissions from bottom trawling flow into the atmosphere within a decade after being remineralized underwater. Because bottom trawling has been conducted on an industrial scale globally since the 1950s, there is continuous flow of CO₂ into the air. Therefore, bottom

trawling is responsible for releasing up to 370 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually — almost double the emissions from the entire global fishing fleet's fuel consumption. Revelation of this previously unaccounted for source of atmospheric carbon emissions underscored the urgent need for action, garnered widespread media attention, and served as a testament to the power of sound research in shaping conservation policy.

SCAN to read
The Guardian
feature:





Exploring One of the Most Biodiverse Oceans on Earth

“We need the ocean far more than it needs us,” stated Yvonne Wong, a researcher from one of the most biodiverse places on the planet. A key player on Pristine Seas’ three-month expedition to Papua New Guinea, Yvonne connected our team with local communities and helped to identify some of the most important marine areas to study. A strong advocate for conservation and community engagement, a compelling speaker, and a natural leader, Yvonne enabled our researchers and filmmakers to do better and more meaningful work in a place that can be challenging to navigate. “I am grateful and honored to work with Pristine Seas scientists from all over the world to help survey and protect

our marine ecosystems for the benefit of everyone,” she continued.

Yvonne was one of many critical partners who took part in Pristine Seas’ expedition in Papua New Guinea, which was conducted alongside the government’s Conservation and Environment Protection Authority (CEPA), the Wildlife Conservation Society, and local communities. From July to October 2024, our scientists used cutting-edge technology to assess the waters’ health in support of Papua New Guinea’s conservation efforts. Gathering data from locally-protected marine areas and previously underexplored ecosystems across New Ireland Province and Manus Province, our team of local and international scientists shed light

“

Growing up in Manus, I was so fond of the ocean and drawn to its bounty of life and mysteries — this feeling of care has always been in my heart even as a child. I hope my conservation work inspires other young girls from my community, province and around Papua New Guinea.”

YVONNE WONG
Conservationist

on a marine area that is home to more than 2,000 species of fishes and a number of species that are found nowhere else on Earth. Our research team is now focused on analyzing findings and producing a scientific report, in hopes that this work will be used to better manage locally-protected areas and inform new opportunities for marine conservation in Papua New Guinea.

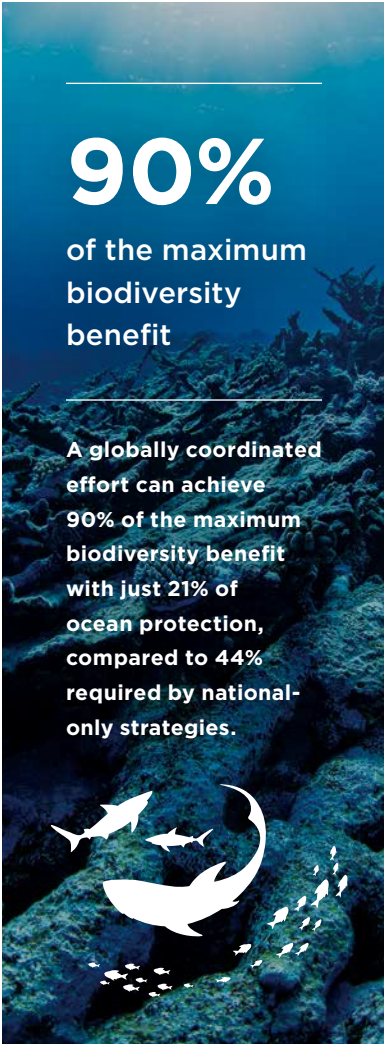
**SCAN for
our field notes
from Papua
New Guinea:**





1,000+ 
people toured the Argo





90%

of the maximum
biodiversity
benefit

A globally coordinated effort can achieve 90% of the maximum biodiversity benefit with just 21% of ocean protection, compared to 44% required by national-only strategies.

Guiding Strategic Ocean Protection through Our Global Analysis

In line with commitments under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, many countries are actively working to protect up to 30% of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). However, the placement of this protection is crucial for maximizing benefits and minimizing costs. To guide the strategic protection of the ocean, Pristine Seas led a global analysis to identify the areas where protection can yield the highest returns for biodiversity, food, and climate.

This global analysis, published in the journal *Nature* in March 2021, uses a flexible framework with thousands of data layers — such as fish stocks, species distributions, human threats, and seafloor carbon — combined with societal preferences to rank areas from highest to lowest priority for protection. This approach is adaptable and aims to find the best areas to protect in order to optimize

multiple objectives. On a global scale, the framework shows that strategically placed protected areas can significantly enhance food supply and biodiversity conservation, and avoid significant carbon emissions. It can also be adapted for national use with detailed data and local stakeholder preferences to optimize benefits for everyone. We actively utilize this tool to provide government partners with useful data for marine spatial planning purposes and to help determine priority study areas for upcoming expeditions.

SCAN for
our global
analysis:



“

Ocean life has been declining worldwide because of overfishing, habitat destruction and global warming. We've pioneered a new way to identify the places that — if highly protected — will boost food production and safeguard marine life, all while reducing carbon emissions.”

ENRIC SALA
Executive Director, Pristine Seas





Unlocking Deep Ocean Mysteries in Our New State-of-the-Art Submersible

Our custom-built submersible, the Argonauta, is the newest addition to Pristine Seas' toolkit! Tripling the depth at which we are able to collect scientific data in real-time, the sub will accompany our multi-year journey across the tropical Pacific ocean, provide data to help governments decide which marine areas to protect, and bring local conservation heroes into the deep to see their home from a new angle.

"Being able to explore the deep sea — one of the most extreme environments on the planet — in this new sub will provide us with a treasure trove of data and images needed to conserve it. When the natural light

begins to dwindle and darkness sets in, the awe-inspiring magic of Earth is on full display," said Enric.

Built by SEAmagine in southern California, the sub can dive down to 1,300 meters. Novel propulsion thrusters enable it to maneuver quietly in all directions, allowing pilots to get close to deep reefs, walls, and seamounts in a safe and unobtrusive manner. The sub can complete missions up to 14 hours — more than doubling the amount of time the team was able to spend aboard its last submersible. An underwater science lab, it comes equipped with mud and water samplers, an 8K (4320 pixel) UHD camera, imaging

sonar, adjustable underwater lighting, and scaling lasers. Scientists use a custom-made pump to collect genetic material from the surrounding water (eDNA) at various depths, which is used to study the presence of organisms that are not visible.

"Our new sub ensures we can welcome people aboard whose families have depended on the ocean for millennia. By documenting the incredible diversity of life found in these hidden depths, we are not only expanding our knowledge of the ocean, but also enhancing our ability to safeguard its future," remarked Dr. Lindsay Young, Pristine Seas' vice president of research.



“

Our team was honored to explore the rich waters of Palau, to work with local researchers, communities, and classrooms, and to contribute important biodiversity information to Palau's marine management efforts.”

WHITNEY GOODELL
*National Geographic Explorer and
Palau Expedition Science Lead*



Delivering Critical Biodiversity Insights to Protect Palau's Waters

We worked under a tight deadline to deliver critical research findings to the Palau Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and the Environment (MAFE) following our expedition in March. We provided necessary biodiversity data from understudied nearshore areas around Palau's remote Southwest Islands, key locations around the main island of Koror, and deep offshore habitats. Our deep-sea research — a first for Palau — provided valuable insights, exciting both the government and local communities. Unfortunately, we also noticed a troubling absence of top predators on otherwise healthy reefs. Longline fishing gear was found

entangled on every dive, impacting fragile ecosystems. These results, alongside a recommendation to protect at least the top 30% priority areas in their waters, were delivered to MAFE in support of their ongoing marine spatial planning efforts in spring 2024.

SCAN for
our field notes
from Palau:





Supporting Conservation Ambitions in the Solomon Islands

From October to December, Pristine Seas led a scientific expedition across the Solomon Islands in collaboration with the government and local partners. The team explored three locations — Marau in Guadalcanal Province, Three Sisters Islands in Makira-Ulawa Province, and remote islands in Temotu Province — chosen for their biodiversity and strategic importance in advancing marine protection efforts.

The expedition aimed to collect critical data, particularly for nearshore regions not fully addressed in the existing national Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) process, offering an opportunity to expand and enhance marine protections in the Solomon Islands. Using technology such as underwater cameras, environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling, and our

new Argonauta submersible, the team assessed coral health, marine species diversity, and environmental conditions. The team revisited the areas decades after initial studies to fill important knowledge gaps and measure what turned out to be the world's largest known coral — both of which we hope will inform future conservation in the Solomon Islands.

Community engagement was a central part of the mission. Pristine Seas, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Human Resources Development, hosted “Ship Days” in the provincial capitals of Honiara, Kira Kira, and Lata, where local students and communities met with the team, learned about the expedition's research and storytelling efforts, and discussed marine conservation careers. Educators joined the

expedition to co-create resources integrating science literacy and ocean conservation into local curricula.

This expedition marks a significant milestone in the Solomon Islands' efforts to advance their protection goals. By providing the scientific data needed to help inform policy decisions, this collaboration represents a major step toward sustainable management of the country's invaluable marine environments for generations to come.

SCAN for our
field notes
from Solomon
Islands:



Providing a Pathway to Rapidly Scale Coastal Marine Protection

A joint study with our partner Dynamic Planet quantified, for the first time, the stunning number of MPAs needed to reach the global target of protecting 30% of our ocean by 2030.

“We know how to restore the ocean’s incredible power to fuel life on Earth, but time is running out,” said Kristin Rechberger, CEO of Dynamic Planet and lead author of the study. “If we are to meet the global target of conserving 30% of the ocean by 2030, the absolute minimum that is required to protect people and the planet from the worst impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and rising food insecurity, 85 MPAs would need to be created daily over six years starting in 2025.”

In other words, to fill the gap, the world needs to establish approximately 190,000 small MPAs in coastal regions and an additional 300 large MPAs in remote, offshore areas by the end of 2030.

Countries have been far too slow to meet — or even plan for — the 30x30 target. Our study, *A pathway to protect 30% of coastal waters by 2030*, proposes a new model to scale coastal ocean protection where coastal MPAs are implemented as a private business, managed by a joint venture of shareholders, including fishers and tourism operators. We believe this locally-led, business-oriented model would significantly enable the replication and scaling of coastal MPAs that are needed to achieve the global 30x30 target in territorial seas.

190K

small coastal
MPAs needed by 2030



SCAN to read
the full study:



STORYTELLING

ELEVATING PACIFIC VOICES AND
TELLING STORIES THAT INSPIRE



2024 BY THE NUMBERS



We are grateful for this invaluable taoga [treasure] of captured knowledge, practice, and experience. Our culture and history is oral and not traditionally written or documented, so this film is a priceless contribution to the preservation of our culture and existence, not just for our children but for the rest of the world too.”

CORAL PASISI
President of Tofia Niue



465M+

REACH ON
SOCIAL
MEDIA



400

TERABYTES
FILMED

*(approximately
5.2 billion times
the storage used
aboard Apollo 11)*



75+

COUNTRIES
BROADCAST/
STREAMED
OUR FILMS

1B+

POTENTIAL
AUDIENCE
FOR BOTTOM
TRAWLING
PAPER RESULTS

17

SHORT
FILMS
PRODUCED



Data about global warming's disastrous effects on the ocean can feel bleak, but stories featuring the people fighting to save it offer glimmers of hope. In 2024, Pristine Seas elevated the voices of conservation heroes and captured stunning footage of ocean resilience to bring those stories to life.

40%

of Niue's Exclusive
Economic Zone
(EEZ) designated as a no-take
area for marine protection



Protecting Paradise: The Story of Niue

Premiered on the National Geographic Channel and Disney+ in early June, our documentary, *Protecting Paradise: The Story of Niue*, follows leaders and community members from the tropical Pacific island nation who are making bold changes to move the needle on marine protection. With a population of under 2,000 people and a marine reserve covering 40% of its waters, Niue has demonstrated the ways in which traditional knowledge and contemporary science can live in harmony for the benefit of people and the planet.

“We all feel like salt water runs through our veins. The ocean is the life force that made us. And made Niue. We owe our existence to the ocean. And that’s why we fight to protect it,” says Coral Pasisi, one of the country’s foremost conservationists who stars in the film.

Protecting Paradise brings viewers onto the Argo research vessel, where the team investigates the health of the Niue Moana Mahu Marine Protected Area, three years after it was established. The scientists and filmmakers witness stunning color and epic marine life, leaving viewers in awe about how only a few years of protection has restored the underwater landscape.

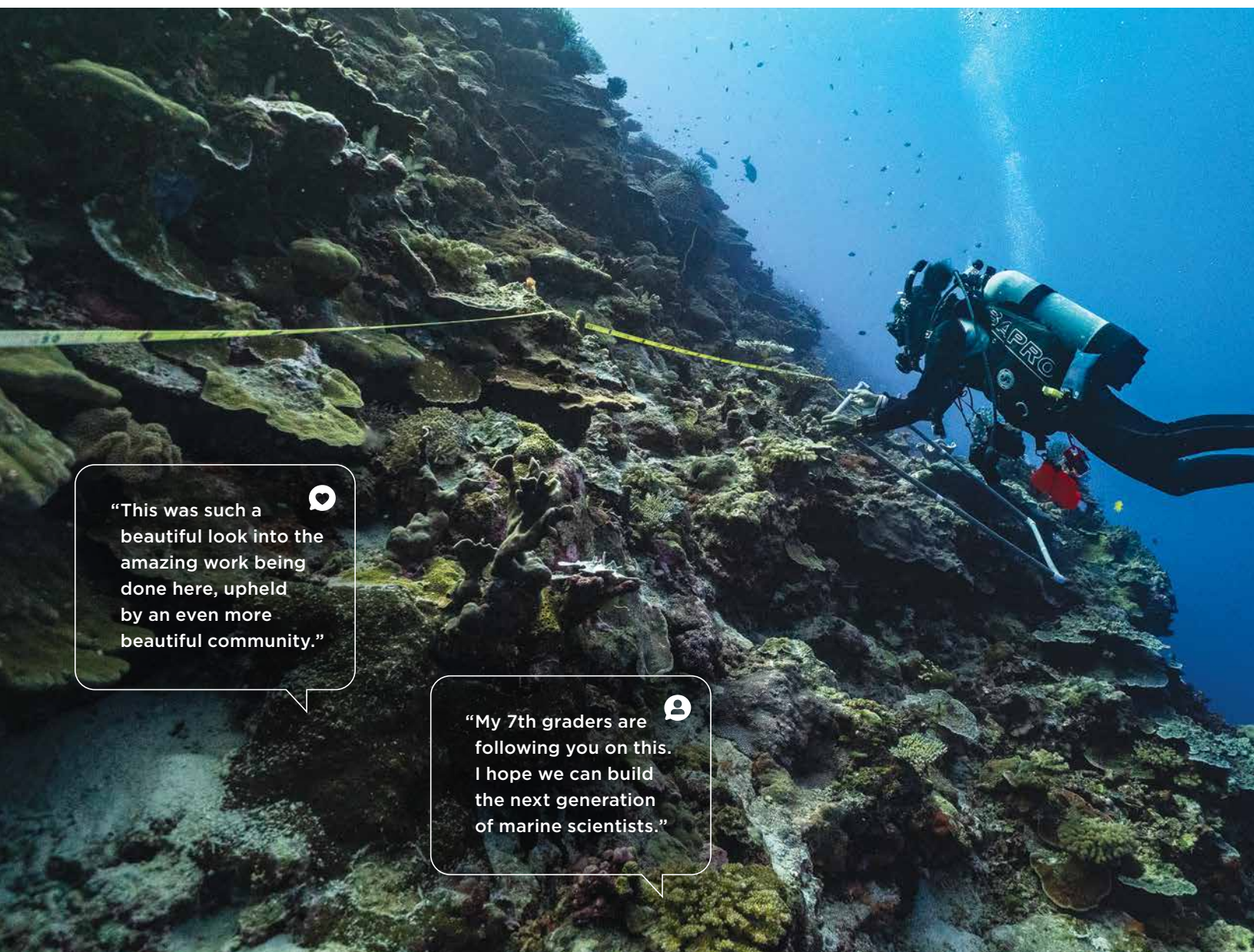
The documentary engaged community members across the country, who attended film screenings with enthusiasm. Pristine Seas used the film’s release as an opportunity to engage wider audiences in a conversation about ocean protection — securing positive press coverage in outlets ranging from *ABC Australia* and *Radio New Zealand* to the *Pacific Island Times* and a cover wrap around *National Geographic Magazine*. Potential audience of press coverage topped 1 billion people, and the trailer alone was viewed more than 1.5 million times on social media.

Social media posts about the film garnered more than 275,000 engagements and 10 million impressions — with donors, government partners, Disney, and others sharing eye-catching content that inspired emotional comments from around the globe.



SCAN to watch
the film trailer:





“This was such a beautiful look into the amazing work being done here, upheld by an even more beautiful community.”

“My 7th graders are following you on this. I hope we can build the next generation of marine scientists.”





Elevating Local Voices and Engaging Global Audiences

Empowering communities to tell their own stories ensures that their priorities are front and center of conservation work. To that end, we have shifted our communications strategy to better elevate local voices and support policy aims — both of which can make a material difference in getting marine protected areas closer to the finish line.

We have moved away from chronological documentation of our expeditions on social media and toward tactics that focus on compelling narratives. In 2024, Pristine Seas' social media channels were bursting with stories of local conservation heroes: From videos featuring scientists in Palau to photos showing local fishers in Papua New Guinea telling us where to anchor using hand-drawn maps. Celebrating local leaders who make brave decisions about conservation is a huge piece of the puzzle, which is why we are more prominently featuring policymakers on our social media channels as well. And our team is getting serious about measuring sentiment in the places we work, so we can gauge how and why these narratives are making an impact.

Our social media metrics can tell a lot: More than 597,000 plays of our video announcing the new MPA in Uruguay. More than 3,700 likes on a story about the rangers who look over protected areas in Palau. But the heartwarming comments we receive on our social channels from the people living in the countries where we work tell even more.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you for the awesome opportunity given to us to visit the vessel, will await for more surprises coming from beneath the surface from the expedition."



10B+ 
estimated reach of Pristine Seas'
press coverage





Making Headlines

We stepped up our media relations game in 2024 — spending time building relationships with journalists and outlets whose audiences help us move the needle on ocean conservation. Reporters call us for quotes and background information because we have proven ourselves as trustworthy sources and thought leaders. Last year, we garnered more than 4,000 mentions and features, including from *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *ABC Australia*, and *Radio New Zealand* — all of whom featured interviews with our team. We ghost wrote op-eds for policymakers in the Pacific to help them get their message out to the public. And we authored opinion pieces in *Nature*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, *Pacific Island Times*, *Mongabay*, and *The Revelator*.

In March, we hosted our first-ever embedded reporter, aboard our expedition to Palau. The resulting coverage from *BBC Radio* shed light on the complexities of ocean protection in the Pacific and featured our state-of-the-art scientific tools. The stories aired on *BBC Newshour*, which has the most listeners in the world of any English language radio news program; on the *BBC World Service*, which has over 188 million weekly listeners; and on the network's most downloaded podcast. We are now better equipped to host journalists aboard the *Argo* in the future.

While measuring the reach of news articles is not an exact science, the potential audience of Pristine Seas' press coverage in 2024 reached more than ten billion.

SCAN to read
the CNN
feature:



“

For the people of the Solomon Islands, this mega coral discovery is monumental. It reinforces the importance of our ocean, which sustains our communities, traditions and future.”

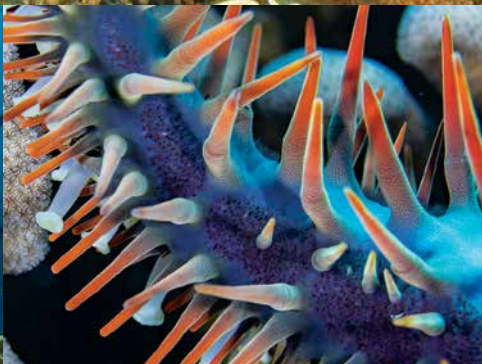
RONNIE POSALA
Fisheries Officer for the Solomon Islands
Fisheries Ministry, quoted in *The Guardian*



50%



of corals were killed in 2016
due to a catastrophic marine
heatwave, but their bounce-
back has been spectacular

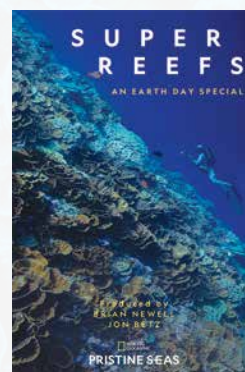




Super Reefs

Super Reefs — another film produced by Pristine Seas and released in 2024 — starred different characters: resilient coral reefs. Released on Earth Day, *Super Reefs* follows our team of marine scientists on a 2021 return trip to the Southern Line Islands of Kiribati, checking up on a catastrophic coral bleaching event from six years earlier that devastated 50% of the corals.

The team hoped to see signs of recovery in the remote reefs, but rather than small improvements, we instead found the most spectacular recovery of coral reefs ever witnessed — thanks to the safeguards put in place to protect the ecosystem. The extraordinary abundance of reef fishes in the Southern Line Islands enabled the corals to bounce back. The documentary, whose soundtrack has been featured in outlets such as *ScreenRant*, serves as visual evidence of the ocean's resilience in the face of global warming events.



“

Documenting changes in the ecosystem allowed for a dual narrative in the film: the viewer learns about the bounce-back of coral reefs and also explores the change, growth, and resilience of Pristine Seas.”

BRIAN NEWELL
Senior Editor, Pristine Seas





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Disney's *Moana 2* Makes a Splash with New Conservation Campaign

Kids and adults around the globe have been inspired by the story of Moana — a brave teenager who thrives on her island, but is drawn to the ocean. Her strong connection to the sea compels her to set sail outside of her community's reef to right a wrong — and help her neighbors.

For the release of Disney's *Moana 2* in November, Pristine Seas teamed up with the Disney Conservation Fund to call on the movie's fans to protect the ocean. The campaign showcased the ways that the ocean connects us, provides for us, and has the power to inspire adventure across cultures and coastlines. We honored "real-life conservation heroes" across the Pacific by highlighting strong, wise women working in the field of ocean protection. And we sat down for a conversation with the voice of Moana herself, Auli'i Cravalho, to talk about the beauty and fragility of today's ocean in a video that was seen by millions of viewers.

It takes people from all walks of life — and all ages — to advocate for the ocean. The campaign provided Pristine Seas with new channels and new audiences to tell the story of marine protected areas. In turn, Pristine Seas inspired people around the world to take steps large and small for the great big blue that connects us all.

SCAN to
learn more
about this
campaign:



“

I want girls to know that their love for the ocean, their connection, and the simple things they do to protect it all matter, whether they're just learning now or leading the way in conservation someday.”

NAOMI LONGA

Team Leader at Sea Women of Melanesia and Member of the Pristine Seas Expedition to Papua New Guinea



COMMUNITY

A young person with dark hair, wearing a red t-shirt, is seen from the side, focused on working on a piece of equipment. The equipment has a large, clear, dome-shaped lens. In the background, a woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow t-shirt, is smiling and watching the young person work. The setting appears to be indoors, possibly a workshop or classroom, with wooden paneling visible in the background.

ENGAGING THE CONSERVATION
LEADERS OF TOMORROW

2024 BY THE NUMBERS

12



EXPERTS
TRAINED ON
DATA ANALYSIS
IN OCEAN
SCIENCE IN
THE SOLOMON
ISLANDS

14



EDUCATORS
ABOARD
THE PALAU
AND SOLOMON
ISLANDS
EXPEDITIONS

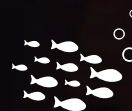


400+

STUDENTS
ATTENDED
"SHIP DAYS"

1,600+

YOUTH
REGISTERED
FOR
OUR
FIRST
EXPLORER
CLASSROOM
SERIES



Our work is never done in isolation — quite the opposite, actually! Everything we do is made possible by and in service of local conservation priorities. This has never been more true than on The Global Expedition — where we're working in more populated areas and depend on local community members to contribute to our scientific research and literally point the way to the places we need to study.

Stepping Up Our Education Efforts

Heather Ketebengang grew up in Palau with a keen interest in the natural world. After graduating from college abroad, she returned home — where she now serves as a community outreach educator. Heather has been helping young people to understand the value of a healthy environment for more than a decade, so when Pristine Seas invited her onto its expedition for a weeklong opportunity to learn more about marine research, she jumped at the chance. “I was appreciative of the learning atmosphere in the Argo,” she said after disembarking from the ship. “There was an opportunity to learn everywhere you turn, and all individuals on the Argo were happy to provide a learning experience. It was great to meet people of many different backgrounds and skills and to learn from one another and to all work together in collecting as much data to increase our knowledge about the offshore environment of Palau.”

Heather is one of many educators who engaged with Pristine Seas’ pilot project in Palau, spearheaded by National Geographic Education. While not every educator was able to join the expedition for a week like Heather did, the project significantly boosted community involvement, expanded nationwide awareness of our expedition, and established an adaptable, scalable model for future locations.

One aspect of the project was a “Ship Day” that drew 118 students, 19 educators, community members, and leaders to the Argo for interactive sessions on our expedition’s goals and on the topic of ocean conservation. Students got to interact with our scientific tools and filmmaking equipment — and told us they felt like Explorers! They were most excited to meet scientists and learn about their career pathways.

Additionally, the Explorer Classroom Ocean Expedition Series hosted five virtual events, attracting over 80 educators and 1,600 students to register for the series (40% of all students in Palau). After the series, 100% of educator survey participants said that, “most or all of my students want to learn more about the ocean around them.” These events were developed in collaboration with Palau’s Ministry of Education. Looking ahead, the government will integrate ocean conservation into the permanent school curriculum through educational resources and Pristine Seas’ content, which was co-developed by local NGOs, National Geographic Education and Pristine Seas.

To continue the momentum, we developed an educational package for communities along our expeditions across Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. These packets include learning tools and resources

to showcase coral reefs and the wonders of the ocean. Based on our learnings from Palau and the Solomon Islands, Pristine Seas plans to replicate and co-create educational and community engagement efforts for future expeditions.

At the Pacific regional level, Pristine Seas is collaborating with the Pacific Community’s (SPC) Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP). In 2024, we were the keynote speaker at EQAP’s annual convening in Fiji of the 15 Ministries of Education. Three key themes emerged from that convening where we can support regionally: 1) co-create science literacy resources including Pristine Seas science, data, and media; 2) inspire students to learn about their ocean and climate change, then take action in their community; 3) support career pathway development and skill building which are critical for more scientists and ocean professionals. Based on these themes, we are in discussion to potentially collaborate on an expanded Teaching and Learning Summit in 2025.

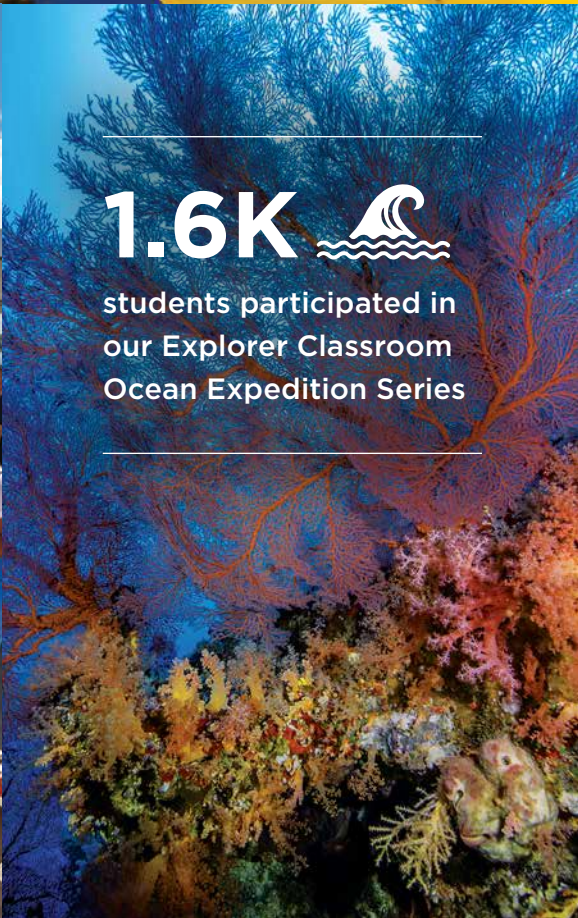
“

I’m going to work with you in a few years!”

The most common sentence we heard from students during our Ship Day in Palau

SCAN for
our Explorer
Classroom
sessions:





1.6K 

students participated in
our Explorer Classroom
Ocean Expedition Series



49



communities
visited in 2024

We spent a lot of time in communities as part of our 2024 expeditions. We were blown away by the generosity and warm welcome we received from each community.

Engaging Community Members During Expeditions

When Pristine Seas first started exploring the planet's wildest places, we saw so much incredible marine life — and so few humans. As time marched on and governments told us what data they needed, our expeditions moved from mostly uninhabited places to ones with thriving coastal communities. As such, we now have the opportunity and obligation to consult with local communities during our expeditions. Practically, this means that we invite local scientists aboard our expeditions to share their knowledge and personal experiences of the ocean with us. It also means we spend a lot of time

visiting coastal communities near the places we're studying and getting their take on what the ocean means to them.

We are lucky enough to engage people who know these coastal communities like the back of their hands to guide us. Like Naomi Longa who, pictured above in purple, helped us ask local fishermen in Papua New Guinea if there were any submerged reefs around their island.

Making an Impact: Data Training Course in the Solomon Islands

The world is a more equitable place when resources and skills are shared, which is why our team developed and piloted a course focused on data analysis using the R programming language, with a strong emphasis on developing skills in ocean science in the Solomon Islands. Our team spent a week training participants from key government ministries and from the Solomon Islands National University (SINU), a group that also prioritized gender parity across its participants.



“

The course is fantastic. I'm learning new things and, as an enumerator for the Ministry of Fisheries, I now have new skills for my work.”

LORINAH

“

This course has significantly enhanced my capabilities as a fisheries student by providing powerful tools for statistical analysis and data visualization and modeling, which are essential for understanding and managing fish populations effectively.”

MELODY



THE
FUTURE
OF
30x30

Currently, 8% of the global ocean is in marine protected areas, most of which allow commercial fishing. Only 3% of the global ocean is highly protected from fishing. We know that highly protected areas deliver the greatest benefits to marine life, people and the economy. That means that to achieve 30% protection we need to:

1

INCREASE THE LEVEL OF PROTECTION OF THE LIGHTLY/MINIMALLY PROTECTED MPAs

The low-hanging fruit would be to ban bottom trawling in the MPAs that allow the destructive practice and ensure that the same bottom trawling effort is not relocated elsewhere. This move would have clear ecological and climate benefits. We have been working with Verra to develop a methodology that would allow governments to reduce bottom trawling efforts, thus avoiding CO₂ emissions. Once the methodology is verified by Verra, governments will be able to sell carbon credits for the avoided emissions, and thus help to finance the transition to more fully protected MPAs.

2

CREATE NEW MPAs TO FILL THE GAP TO 30%

To fill the gap to 30% just in the EEZs of coastal countries, the world would need 300 new large MPAs (100,000 km² in size) in remote areas, and 190,000 small MPAs (10 km²) nearshore. Pristine Seas will continue with its mission to help create large highly protected MPAs and contribute to the 30x30 goal. However, it is clear that our contribution — although perhaps larger than any other group working on this issue — will still be far from achieving 30x30. Hence our plans to develop an international campaign to accelerate protections before or without the need for expeditions and related resource-consuming work.

2025 will be Pristine Seas' most ambitious year yet. Our team will conduct shallow and deep water expeditions across Fiji, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, where we believe we can play a unique role in catalyzing protection. In June, we will support key MPA announcements and debut a new feature documentary in Monaco and at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France. Meanwhile, we will produce world-class research, create stunning films, and foster strong Pacific partnerships.



FIJI

Pristine Seas will launch its first expedition of 2025 to Fiji. The expedition will be conducted in close collaboration with Blue Prosperity Fiji (BPF), the partnership between the Fiji government and the Waitt Institute. BPF is the primary entity leading efforts in Fiji to sustainably manage 100% of Fiji's EEZ and designate 30% as highly protected.

Our expedition will focus its efforts on the remote island of Rotuma (home to our senior director for ocean policy, Kevin Chand!), Kadavu Island, and key offshore areas of interest for the government. Working closely with the Waitt Institute, we will use this expedition as a moment to build a compelling case for protection in Fiji.



TUVALU

At the invitation of Prime Minister Feleti Teo, Pristine Seas will conduct an expedition to Tuvalu in 2025 to support the government's goal to protect 30% of the waters by 2030. Currently, Tuvalu's capacity to manage its waters is extremely limited and few comprehensive surveys have ever been conducted of the EEZ. Pristine Seas' expedition will enable Tuvalu to better understand its environment and identify critical areas for protection.

Our expedition aims to conduct a broad survey of Tuvalu's nine islands to understand their ecological value, both shallow and deep. Using the information and stories gathered on expedition, we will work with the government of Tuvalu to identify areas for protection.



VANUATU

In June 2024, the Prime Minister of Vanuatu launched Vanuatu's Revised National Ocean Policy and first draft of their Marine Spatial Plan. As part of the plan, Vanuatu is committed to achieving 100% management and 30% protection of their EEZ by 2030.

Pristine Seas will conduct an expedition to Vanuatu in support of their new National Ocean Policy, in partnership with Blue Prosperity Vanuatu and the Waitt Institute. The Government of Vanuatu has expressed that they are in need of scientific data and information to support their plans for protection and management and hope to work with our team to identify areas of interest for protection.

OUR PROGRAMMATIC GOALS FOR 2025:

IMPLEMENT



Implement Year 2 of the Pristine Seas Pacific Campaign

In 2024, Pristine Seas launched the Pacific Campaign — an integrated, program-wide effort to support the establishment, expansion and sustainable management of marine protected areas in the Pacific community. In 2025, Pristine Seas will continue the implementation of the plan and will use the 2025 UN Ocean Conference as a critical moment.

OPTIMIZE



Optimize and Streamline Interdepartmental Processes & Collaboration

Beginning in 2025, Pristine Seas's budget will be over \$20M per year. Working with the new director for business operations, each department will be responsible for managing its own budget within the overall budget. In 2025, we will develop and implement new processes to ensure effective and efficient collaboration across teams to deliver safe and successful expeditions.

SUPPORT



Support the Designation/Implementation of at Least One New Marine Protected Area

Based on previous expeditions' efforts, we will support the designation of at least one new MPA in 2025.

FINALIZE



Finalize Engagements in Dominica, Canada & Latin America

We will finalize our work and transition away from legacy geographies, including Dominica, Canada and most of Latin America (we will continue light-touch work in Chile and Argentina).

EMBODY



Embody the Ethos and NG Code of Ethics

Pristine Seas values are embodied in our Ethos and in the NG Code of Ethics. In 2025, we will continue to implement the Ethos in all of our team interactions, internally and externally.



OUR PARTNERS



COUNCIL OF ADVISORS

HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, *Chair*

José Andrés, *Founder, World Central Kitchen*

Samantha Campbell, *President, The Campbell Foundation*

Steve Case, *CEO, Revolution; Chairman, Case Foundation*

John Caspers, *President, Tanka Foundation*

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Steve Koltes, *Co-Founder, CVC Capital Partners*

Sven Lindblad, *Chairman, Lindblad Expeditions*

Cathy Novelli, *Former Under Secretary of State*

Kristin Rechberger, *CEO, Dynamic Planet*

Roger Sant, *Chair, Summit Foundation*

Andrew Steer, *President and CEO, Bezos Earth Fund*

Phil Stephenson, *Chairman, Philip Stephenson Foundation*

Jill Tiefenthaler, *CEO, National Geographic Society*

Jeff Ubben, *Chairman, Look and See Foundation*

Rolly van Rappard, *Co-Founder and Chairman, CVC Capital Partners*

Ted Waitt, *Chairman, Waitt Foundation*

Antha Williams, *Environment Program Leader, Bloomberg Philanthropies*

FOUNDING SPONSOR

Blancpain

CURRENT FUNDERS

Beagle Charitable Foundation, Allison Bennington, Bezos Earth Fund, Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Campbell Foundation, Disney Conservation Fund, Don Quixote Foundation, The Heinz Family Foundation, Levy Foundation, LGT Venture Philanthropy, Lindblad Expeditions–National Geographic Fund, Look and See Foundation, Ann Luskey, Oracle, Philip Stephenson Foundation, Postcode Lottery Group, Rituals, Serventi Family Foundation, Tanka Foundation, Ted and Michele Waitt-TTMMC Fund, UBS Optimus Foundation, Walmart Foundation, an anonymous donor, and other individual donors.





In Memoriam: Enric “Kike” Ballesteros

Enric “Kike” Ballesteros passed away in Barcelona on November 27, 2024, after a long battle with cancer. Kike was a founding member of Pristine Seas, and friend and companion of adventures for over 30 years.

We never knew anyone with Kike’s thirst for knowledge. His endless curiosity built up an encyclopedic knowledge that he shared generously and from which we drank ceaselessly. All his thinking was built upon a knowledge of natural history. Kike is the only person who has published studies on vegetation from the highest plants of the Pyrenees to the deepest known plant in the ocean. He published over 300 studies and several books on subjects including algae, fishes, and invertebrates, marine and freshwater — and mushrooms (one of his passions)! He was “biodiversity man” — and an irreplaceable sage on our team. Kike was the Leonardo da Vinci of marine ecology. No wonder why he was our jack of all trades — and master of many.

Over the years he mentored dozens of wonderful people who became great scientists. His team was like a big family, and he was the benevolent patriarch, making everyone laugh and showing the greatest humor. Kike was also the most generous friend and colleague. He would go out on the mountains for hours to collect wild mushrooms and then cook them for you at his apartment in Tossa de Mar, Spain. Or, in the remote beaches of Baja California, he would jump in the water after a long day of work to spear a fish, grill it on a campfire, and feed us all. He was the ultimate team player, an inspiration to all of us. To us, Kike was the epitome of a leader. We deeply respected him and admired his empathy and humanity.

But, according to him, his most important — and proud — contribution was with Pristine Seas. Thanks to his tireless dedication we were able to inspire the protection of some of the most wonderful places on our planet. Life in the ocean will be indebted to Kike forever.

Finally, Kike’s vitality was like fire. Quincy Jones said, “If you live to 80 you have 29,000 days on earth. I’m going to burn through them. People will know we came through here.” Kike lived about 24,000 days on this planet, and he did burn through them. And we and many others know he lived — it’s as if he left deep carvings in granite for generations to see. He was even diving in the Solomon Islands in November on what would be his last expedition. Just one more of the many lessons we take from him.

When loved ones leave us, it always feels too early. But Kike’s departure feels the earliest of all. Dear friend, we’re going to miss you.

APPENDIX 1: PRISTINE SEAS 2024 SCIENCE PUBLICATIONS

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APPENDIX 2: MARINE PROTECTED AREAS CREATED WITH SUPPORT FROM PRISTINE SEAS

AREA	MPA NAME	EXPLORED	ESTABLISHED
Northern Line Islands	<i>Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument</i>	August 2005, August 2007	January 2009
Southern Line Islands	<i>Southern Line Islands Marine Protected Area</i>	March 2009, October 2021	April 2015
Cocos Island	<i>Cocos Island National Park</i>	September 2009	Expanded December 2021
Easter Island / Salas y Gómez	<i>Motu Motiro Hiva Marine Park</i>	February 2011	April 2010
Pitcairn Islands	<i>Pitcairn Islands Marine Reserve</i>	March 2012	September 2016
Gabon	<i>Gabon Marine Protected Area Network</i>	October 2012	June 2017
Nazca-Desventuradas	<i>Nazca-Desventuradas Marine Park</i>	February 2013	August 2016
Franz Josef Land	<i>Russian Arctic National Park</i>	July 2013	August 2016
New Caledonia	<i>Natural Park of the Coral Sea</i>	October 2013	August 2018
Palau	<i>Palau National Marine Sanctuary</i>	September 2014	October 2015
Seychelles Outer Islands	<i>Aldabra Group Marine National Park</i>	March 2015	February 2018
Selvagens Islands	<i>Selvagens Islands Nature Reserve</i>	September 2015	Expanded November 2021
Galápagos Islands	<i>Darwin and Wolf Marine Sanctuary</i>	November 2015	March 2016
Clipperton Atoll	<i>Clipperton Marine Protected Area</i>	March 2016	November 2016
Revillagigedo Islands	<i>Revillagigedo National Park</i>	March 2016	November 2017
Niue	<i>Niue Moana Mahu Marine Protected Area</i>	September 2016	April 2020
Ross Sea	<i>Ross Sea Marine Protected Area</i>	Diplomacy 2016–2017	December 2017
Tristan da Cunha	<i>Tristan da Cunha Marine Protection Zone</i>	January 2017	August 2021
Cape Horn	<i>Diego Ramírez-Drake Passage Marine Park</i>	January 2017	January 2018
Juan Fernández Archipelago	<i>Juan Fernández Marine Park</i>	March 2017	January 2018
Ascension	<i>Ascension Island Marine Protected Area</i>	May 2017	August 2019
Yaganes: Tierra del Fuego / Isla de Los Estados	<i>Yaganes Marine National Park</i>	February 2018	December 2018
Yaganes: Tierra del Fuego / Isla de Los Estados	<i>Peninsula Mitre Natural Protected Area</i>	February 2018	December 2022
The Azores	<i>Azores Marine Protected Area Network</i>	June 2018	October 2024
Namuncurá-Banco Burdwood II	<i>Namuncurá-Burdwood Bank II National Marine Reserve</i>	November 2018	December 2018
Malpelo	<i>Malpelo Fauna and Flora Sanctuary</i>	April 2018, February 2022	Expanded September 2017 June 2022
Islas Marías	<i>Islas Marías Biosphere Reserve</i>	May 2018	Expanded August 2021
Uruguay	<i>Isla de Lobos National Park</i>	December 2021	August 2024
Republic of the Marshall Islands	<i>National Sanctuaries of Bikar and Bokak</i>	August–October 2023	December 2024



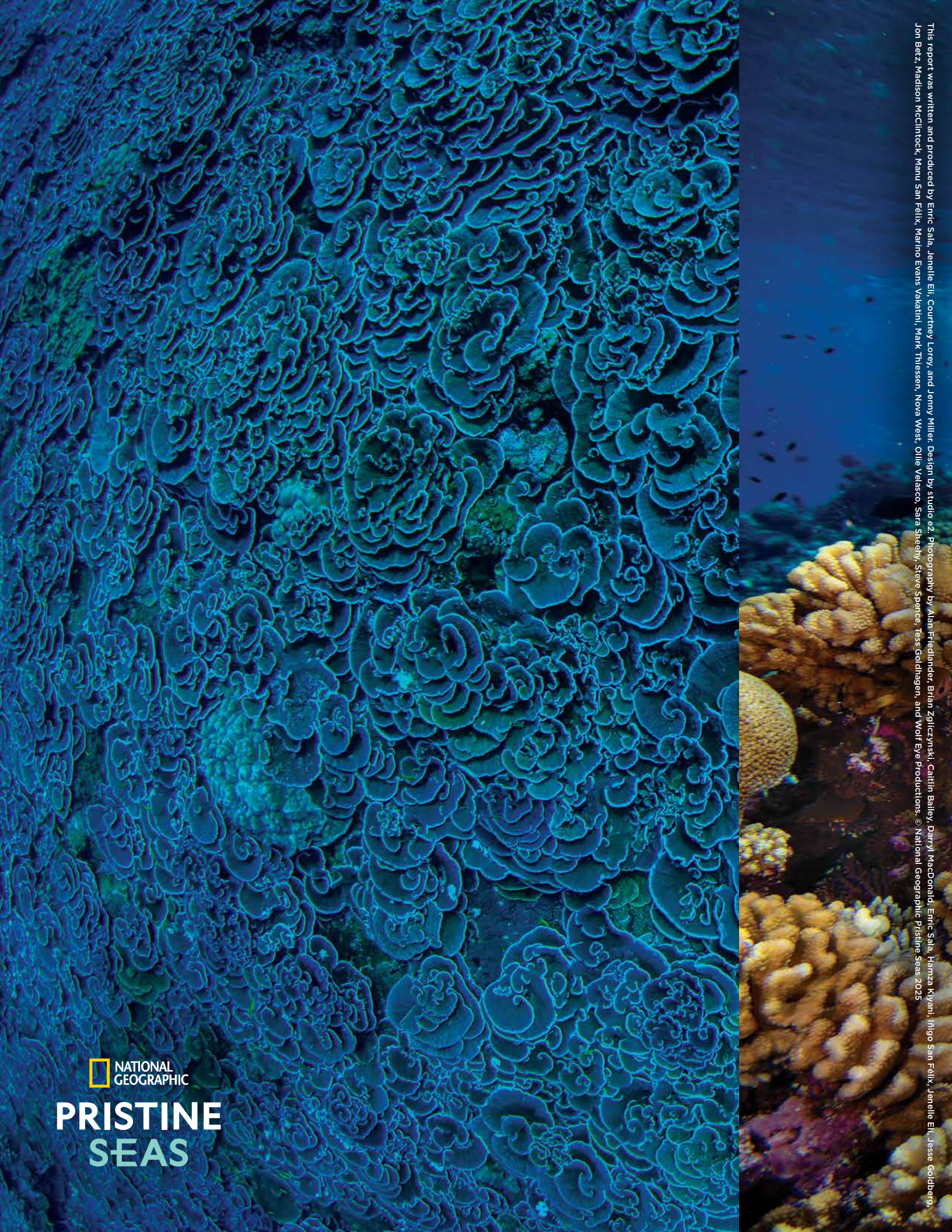


THANK YOU

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